

BIG FIVE

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HONG KONG

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to questions most often asked. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

“With reason one can travel the world over; without it, it is hard to move an inch.”

~ Chinese proverb ~

Hong Kong

~ Elevation: 79 feet / Latitude: 22 20N / Longitude: 114 11E

Average Temperature

°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	62	63	67	73	79	83	85	85	83	79	72	65

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	1.1	1.7	2.9	5.5	11.2	15.7	14.3	14.8	11.7	4.7	1.5	1

WEATHER

Hong Kong's climate is sub-tropical. During November and December, there are pleasant breezes, plenty of sunshine and comfortable temperatures. Many people regard these as the best months of the year. January and February are cloudier, with occasional cold fronts followed by dry northerly winds. Temperatures can drop below 10 °C in urban areas but sub-zero temperatures and frost occur only at times on high ground and in the New Territories.

When a tropical cyclone is about 700 to 1000 kilometers southeast of Hong Kong, the weather is usually fine and exceptionally hot, but isolated thunderstorms sometimes occur in the evenings. If the cyclone's center comes closer to the territory, winds will increase and rain can become heavy and widespread. The heavy rain may last for a few days, and subsequent landslides and flooding sometimes cause considerably more damage than winds.

The mean annual rainfall ranges from around 1300 millimeters at Wagland Island to more than 3000 millimeters around Tai Mo Shan. About 80 per cent of the rain falls between May and September. August is the wettest month, raining about four days out of seven with a monthly average at the Hong Kong Observatory (formerly called Royal Observatory) of 391.4 millimeters. The driest month is January with 23.4 millimeters when it rains only about six days in the month.

Spring: *March to mid-May.* Temperature: 18°C (64°F) to 27°C (80°F). Humidity: around 77%, occasional mist and rain showers. **What to wear:** sweaters and shower-proof jackets.

Summer: *Late May to mid-September.* Temperature: 26°C (79°F) to 33°C (91°F). Humidity: 80% plus. Normally sunny, but during the typhoon season (July-September) there can be heavy rain. **What to wear:** Short sleeves for outdoors on sunny days, lightweight sweater for indoors as restaurants tend to turn up the air-conditioning. Severe weather phenomena that can affect Hong Kong include tropical cyclones, strong winter and summer monsoon winds, monsoon troughs and thunderstorms with associated squalls that are most frequent from April to September. Waterspouts and hailstorms occur infrequently, while snow and tornadoes are rare. During the storm season (June through September), typhoons hit Hong Kong on average of two or three times a year.

Autumn: *Late September to early December.* Temperature: 18°C (64°F) to 28° (82°F). Humidity: around 72%, sunny and clear, ideal walking weather. **What to wear:** light clothing for the day, and sweaters and light jackets for the evenings.

Winter: *Late December to February.* Temperature: 14°C (57°F) to 20°C (68°F). Humidity: around 72%, sunny, bright and cool. **What to wear:** have overcoats ready.

TIME ZONE / TRAVELING TIME

Hong Kong is nine hours ahead of the East Coast of the United States (GMT +8:00). Hong Kong does not observe Daylight Savings Time.

Approximate flight times: From Hong Kong to London is 12 hours 50 minutes, to Los Angeles is 14 hours 15 minutes, to New York is 17 hours, to Singapore is 3 hours 40 minutes, to Sydney is 9 hours and to Tokyo is 4 hours 20 minutes.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Effective October 28, 1998, U.S. citizens holding a valid passport and staying for 3 months or less in Hong Kong are now automatically issued a visa upon arrival. They must have a U.S. passport valid **for at least 6 months** beyond intended stay and valid at least 4 months prior to entry in Hong Kong. Proof of adequate funds for their stay and onward transportation are required.

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Hong Kong consulate.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

You will arrive at Hong Kong's international airport, Chek Lap Kok on Lantau Island, 45 kilometers (28 miles) from central Hong Kong. If you are traveling with Big Five Tours, you will be met at the airport upon your arrival. All baggage is checked at passenger's risk.

Departure tax: HK\$80; children aged 12 and under are exempt.

CUSTOMS ENTERING HONG KONG

The following goods may be imported into Hong Kong by persons aged over 18 without incurring customs duty:

Non-residents: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 1l bottle of wine or spirits; reasonable quantity of other items for personal use.

Note: (a) Antibiotic drugs are prohibited unless confirmed by a medical note. (b) The import of animals is strictly controlled.

Prohibited items: Firearms, narcotics, counterfeit items, copyright-infringed goods, plants, endangered species (dead or alive) and products deriving from them.

CUSTOMS RETURNING TO THE U.S.

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change. For more information and a list of exempt items contact your nearest Customs office or write the *U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044*.

HEALTH / MEDICAL FACILITIES

Visitors should be in generally good health. All visitors are advised to take out private health insurance.

While Hong Kong requires no vaccinations for tourists entering the country, vaccination against typhoid and polio is advised. There may be a slight risk of malaria in the rural areas although prophylaxis is not considered necessary. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters that are recommended depending on your personal health.

Other risks: Japanese encephalitis may occur in the New Territories between April and October. Immunization against hepatitis A, B, diphtheria and TB is sometimes recommended. Dengue fever is increasing, with 36 confirmed cases since 22 September 2002.

Food & drink: All water direct from government mains in Hong Kong exceeds the United Nations WHO standards and is fit for drinking. However, all hotels also provide bottled water in guest rooms. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Health care: Hotels have a list of government-accredited doctors. First-class Western medicine is practiced. Excellent dental care is available. For emergency medical services dial 999. Hong Kong's government health care policy is that no one should be denied adequate medical treatment because of lack of means. To this end, it provides a range of services and facilities. The Department of Health is the government's health adviser and regulatory authority. It safeguards community health through promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services.

Note: If you wear contact lenses or glasses, we suggest you take a spare set [just in case]. If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip, but do not bring an excessive amount that will arouse suspicion. For Customs inspections, keep all medicine in their original containers. Please be sure to take a sufficient supply of any over-the-counter items you feel necessary.

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the lodges, hotels, and camps have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them. Be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of

entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Zippered compartments of backpacks are excellent targets in the downtown area. It's best not to wear backpacks on your back. Don't carry a lot of packages at once. Purses should be zippered and have short shoulder straps so you can protect them with your upper arm. Wallets and passports should not be carried in your back pocket, and expensive watches, chains and jewelry should not be worn. Don't leave cameras or binoculars in sight of any open window. Do not leave any valuables or money unattended in your hotel room. If you follow these precautions, you probably won't have any trouble. Common sense is the best deterrent to theft.

Carry Your Passport. Please ensure that you carry your passport or tourist card at all times. Never go anywhere (not even the Post Office) without your passport or tourist card. Should you ever be asked, you **MUST** be able to present your identification, your passport, tourist card, or visa. Not having it with you could mean a trip to the Police Station.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page: <http://travel.state.gov>.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside. Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Always ask permission to photograph people. The same rule of thumb also applies to photographing places of worship, religious festivals, and rural homesteads.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm are a good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. A zoom lens in the 70 to 200 mm range will help you capture the sights of the city and its famous harbor. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Film: It's strongly recommended that you bring what you need with you. You will undoubtedly shoot more pictures than you planned. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot one 36 exposure roll of film per day, and enthusiastic shooters will double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries tend to be expensive.

INTRODUCTION TO HONG KONG

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's more conventional name is Hong Kong, which means "Fragrant Harbor." Its capital is Victoria. The city's flag is a stylized, white, five-petal bauhinia flower in the center of a red field.

Time: GMT + 8. **Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz.

Language: Chinese and English are the official languages with Cantonese most widely spoken. English is spoken by many, particularly in business circles.

Religion: Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist, with Christian and Muslim minorities, but there are also places of worship for most other religious groups.

Telephone: Directory enquiries services are computerized. For directory enquiries, dial 1081 (English) or 1083 (Chinese). Full IDD is available. Country code: 852. Outgoing international code: 001. Local public telephone calls can be made either with phone cards or coins. Local calls are free from private phones.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 and 1800 networks provide excellent coverage, even to most of the smaller outlying islands. Mobile telephones also function all over the underground network, thanks to transmitters installed in the tunnels.

Fax: HK Telecom International Ltd and the post office provide services. Bureaufax and international services are also available.

Internet: Internet cafes are plentiful nationwide.

Post: Regular postal services are available. Airmail to Europe takes 3 to 5 days. Poste Restante facilities are available. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1800; Sat 0800-1400.

MONEY

Currency: Hong Kong Dollar (HK\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of HK\$1000, 500, 100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of HK\$10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50, 20 and 10 cents.

Currency exchange: Foreign currency can be changed in banks, hotels and bureaux de change. Banks usually offer the best rate of exchange.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travelers' Checks: Accepted almost everywhere. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in Pounds Sterling, US Dollars or Euros.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import or export of either local or foreign currency.

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1630, Sat 0900-1230.

SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Hong Kong is one of the great centers for international cooking. Apart from Chinese food, which is superb, there are also many Indian, Vietnamese, Filipino, Singapore/Malaysian and Thai restaurants. It is the home of authentic Chinese food from all the regions of China, which may be sampled on a sampan in Causeway Bay, on a floating restaurant at Aberdeen, in a Kowloon restaurant, in a street market or at a deluxe hotel. Hotels serve European and Chinese food but there are also restaurants serving every type of local cuisine.

Chinese regional variations on food include Cantonese, Northern (Peking), Chiu Chow (Swatow), Shanghai, Sichuan and Hakka. Cantonese is based on parboiling, steaming and quick stir-frying to retain natural juices and flavors. The food is not salty or greasy and seafoods are prepared especially well, usually served with steamed rice. Specialties include Dim Sum (savory snacks, usually steamed and served in bamboo baskets on trolleys). These include Cha siu bao (barbecue pork bun), Har gau (steamed shrimp dumplings) and Shiu mai (steamed and minced pork with shrimp). The emphasis in Northern food is on bread and noodles, deep-frying and spicy sauces. Specialties include Peking duck and hotpot dishes. Shanghainese food is diced or shredded, stewed in soya or fried in sesame oil with pots of peppers and garlic. Chiu Chow is served with rich sauces and Hakka food is generally simple in style with baked chicken in salt among the best dishes. Sichuan food is hot and spicy with plenty of chillies. A specialty is barbecued meat.

The Chinese do not usually order a drink before dinner. Popular Chinese wines and spirits are Zhian Jing (a rice wine served hot like sake), Liang hua pei (potent plum brandy), Kaolian (a whisky) and Mao toi. Popular beers are the locally brewed San Miguel and Tsingtao (from China) with imported beverages widely available.

Note: If you are a vegetarian, have food allergies, or are on a special diet, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs.

Nightlife: There are many nightclubs, discos, hostess clubs, theatres and cinemas. Cultural concerts, plays and exhibitions can be seen at Hong Kong's City Hall which also has a dining room, ballroom and cocktail lounge. The Hong Kong Cultural Centre, including a 2100-seat Concert Hall, 1750-seat Grand Theatre, a studio theatre with 300-500 seats and restaurants, bars and other facilities, has become the major venue for cultural concerts, plays and operas. Hong Kong Art Centre in Wan Chai supplements the City Hall's entertainment with culture in the form of Chinese opera, puppet shows, recitals and concerts. American, Chinese, European and Japanese films with subtitles are shown at a number of good air conditioned cinemas. Two daily papers, the Hong Kong Standard and the South China Morning Post, contain details of entertainment. An unusual event to watch is night horse-racing held Wednesday nights from September to May. For further details, contact the Hong Kong Tourism Board (see Contact Addresses section).

Shopping: Whether one is shopping in modern air conditioned arcades or more traditional street markets, the range of goods available in Hong Kong is vast. Many famous-name shops have opened in Hong Kong, bringing the latest styles in great variety. Places that display the QTS sign (Quality Tourism Services) are the best guarantee of satisfaction. Bargaining is practiced in the smaller shops and side stalls only. There are excellent markets in Stanley on Hong Kong Island, which is in a beautiful setting in a small village on the coast, and in Temple Street, Kowloon, which is a night market. Tailoring is first class. Except for a few items, such as liquor and perfume, Hong Kong is a duty-free port. Shopping hours: Hong Kong Island (Central & Western): 1000-1900 (1000-2000 along Queen's Road). Hong Kong Island (Causeway Bay & Wan Chai): 1000-2130. Kowloon (Tsimshatsui & Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok): 1000-2100. Many shops are open Sunday. Shopping hours may vary greatly.

Social Conventions: Handshaking is the common form of greeting. In Hong Kong the family name comes first, so Wong Man Ying would be addressed as Mr Wong. Most entertaining takes place in restaurants rather than in private homes. Informal wear is acceptable. Some restaurants and social functions often warrant formal attire. Smoking is widely acceptable and only prohibited where specified.

Tipping: Most hotels and restaurants add 10 percent service charge. An additional five percent gratuity is also expected. Small tips are expected by taxi-drivers, doormen and washroom attendants.

Gifts To Avoid: clocks symbolize death, and scissors / sharp objects symbolize the severing of relationships. Gifts are exchanged at the time of Chinese New Year (at various dates from mid-January to February). Blue and white are the Chinese colors for mourning and should be avoided.

Phrases: To thank someone for a gift, say "DOR-jay"; for a service rendered the word is "Ng-GOI" (with the "ng" pronounced something like the "m" in "hmm"). Since the Chinese are delighted with Westerners who speak their language, a phrase in Cantonese will be greatly admired, but be very sure of your pronunciation.

Clothing: Hong Kong is as cosmopolitan as urban environment, and you should dress accordingly. Business people always dress smartly: men wear suits and women wear a suit or a tailored dress. Many of the more expensive restaurants stipulate proper attire. Please be sure to observe appropriate dress codes when entering religious sanctuaries, buildings, or sites. Laundry services are efficient and offered in most hotels.

ECONOMY

The mainstays of Hong Kong's economy are light manufacturing, shipping and financial services. The last of these is now the most important as Hong Kong has developed into a major international financial centre. Manufacturing is concentrated in textiles, consumer electronics and other consumer goods (Hong Kong is the world's largest producer of children's toys). The shipping industry is assisted by Hong Kong's natural deep-water harbor, probably the best in the region. Much regional trade is still conducted through Hong Kong.

Within months of the handover of the territory to China in July 1997, a financial crisis which affected the whole region started to take hold. With a more mature and stable banking system than most of the rest of the region, Hong Kong showed few immediate ill effects. However, the severe impact on many of the territory's major trading partners and the depression of the regional economy was sure to cause some damage, and did so in the form of a 7 per cent drop in output during 1999. There was some recovery during 2000, but unexpectedly this did not last and by mid-2002, the economy was contracting at an annual rate of 1.5 per cent. Unemployment, meanwhile, had grown to 8 per cent.

The USA, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Germany are Hong Kong's main trading partners.

HISTORY

Hong Kong was part of the Chinese empire before coming under British administration as a direct result of the 19th-century Opium Wars. The conflict arose from Chinese resistance to allowing their ports to trade in opium produced in British-controlled India. The British used force on two occasions in the late 1830s and late 1850s to impose their commercial will. When peace terms were drawn up in 1841 in the Treaty of Nanking, which ended the First Opium War, the Emperor of China agreed that Hong Kong Island should be ceded to Britain and five other ports licensed for foreign trade. The territory of Hong Kong comprises two other pieces of land: the Kowloon peninsula was ceded under the Convention of Peking in 1860, and in 1898 the New Territories were leased from China for 99 years. The British controlled Hong Kong from then – apart from a four-year period during World War II when the territory was occupied by the Japanese – until the territory was handed back to the Chinese in July 1997.

The terms under which the reversion took place were settled at an agreement signed by the British and Chinese Governments in December 1984. As well as confirming the terms of previous agreements, the 1984 agreement contained guarantees on the future of Hong Kong, specifically that the territory would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, especially in the economic field where its existing system would be largely left intact. The slogan 'one country, two systems' was coined by the Chinese to describe the future regime and its relationship with mainland China. Only in the fields of foreign affairs and defense would the new

Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong be subject to the diktat of Peking.

The main point of contention in the period leading up to handover was political representation. Under the colonial regime, democratic representation had been kept to a minimum and executive powers were firmly retained by the Governor. The system has survived, largely intact, since the departure of the British in July 1997.

Beijing selected the shipping tycoon Tung Chee Hwa to fill the new post of chief executive with powers analogous to those of the former Governor. A pro-Beijing political party created shortly before the handover, the Democratic Party for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), took control of the LegCo after the first election held under Chinese rule in May 1998. The result has been more or less repeated in subsequent polls. The limited powers of the LegCo and the restricted nature of the electoral franchise mean that no serious opposition can be mounted to the policies of the administration. In June 2002, Tung Chee Hwa was confirmed in a second term of office as chief executive.

The timing for the new regime was unfortunate in as much as the Asian financial crisis hit the region just months after the territory had changed hands. Initially, it seemed that Hong Kong would come through largely unscathed: in fact, the economy has been depressed for most of the last five years (see Economy section). This has given rise to some political discontent and the self-confidence that previously characterized Hong Kong is now waning severely. Tung has promised to make government more 'accountable' but it is unclear how he plans to do this. China is pushing the administration to introduce an anti-subversion law, principally to combat the Falun Gong Christian religious sect.

GEOGRAPHY

Hong Kong is located about 80 miles south-east of Guangzhou on the coast of China in the sub-tropical climate of the mouth of the Zhu Jiang ("Pearl River"), earning the city its nickname "The Pearl of the Orient." It borders South China Sea and China. Its geographic coordinates are 22 15 N, 114 10 E.

Hong Kong includes Hong Kong Island, which was ceded by China in 1842 and is home to the capital; Kowloon peninsula, ceded in 1860; and the New Territories. The mainland's New Territories was leased in 1898 for 99 years along with Deep Bay, Mirs Bay, and offshore islands. Only about one seventh of the land is arable, and food and water must be imported, much of it from China.

Hong Kong's total area is 1,092 square kilometers with about 733 kilometers of coastline, more than 200 islands, and is roughly six times the size of Washington, DC. The terrain is hilly to mountainous with steep slopes and lowlands in the north. Elevation ranges from 0 meters along the South China Sea coast to 958 meters at Tai Mo Shan. Its natural resources include an outstanding deepwater harbor.

Transportation is modern and well-organized and most tours and sightseeing trips are completed the same day. A tour of the New Territories takes about 6 hours, one of Hong Kong Island about 4. Other popular excursions include sport and recreation tours and night tours, such as a dinner cruise and a tram tour with cocktails served.

Hong Kong Island: The island is an eclectic mix of modern skyscrapers, colonial buildings and traditional temples. Central is the financial and commercial hub of the island and the main point for catching the famous star ferry to the Kowloon Peninsula. A unique way to experience the buzz of

city life is by riding the 800m-long central-mid-levels escalator (the world's longest covered outdoor escalator) which transports tens of thousands of people each day and has created its own escalator culture of cafes and restaurants. Central is also a major shopping and entertainment area with the trendy night spots of Lang Kwai Fong and SoHo. Nearby, along Hollywood Road is Man Mo Temple, the country's oldest Chinese temple that honors the gods of literature (Man) and war (Mo). One of the best ways to view the incredible density and scale of the city is from Victoria Peak. Reached by the Peak Tram, that rises 386m up the mountainside within 8 minutes, the summit offers an exceptional panorama, whether by day or night. At the foot of the tram lies Government House, the residence of 25 British Governors from 1855 until Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. Other vestiges of this colonial past are seen in St John's Cathedral, thought to be the oldest Christian church in the Far East, and the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware. Located in Hong Kong Park, the museum is an imposing colonial-style building housing ancient Chinese artifacts used in tea-making.

Wan Chai district is renowned for its small shops and markets, as well as fashionable restaurants and bars. The impressive 78-storey Central Plaza stands here (Hong Kong's tallest building) and visitors can view the city from the Sky Lobby on its 46th floor. After 1800 each day, neon lights upon the building's rooftop change color every hour to denote the time of evening. Nearby, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre was the site for the handover ceremony. The Golden Bauhinia monument outside the centre symbolizes this momentous occasion. Causeway Bay is the main embarkation point for the cross-harbor tunnel. Attractions in the area include the Happy Valley Racetrack, many local teahouses, department stores and the Noon Day Gun, that has fired at midday since the 1840s.

The south of the island is characterized by a more relaxed pace of life and beautiful bays and harbors. Aberdeen Harbor can be toured by traditional fishing junks and sampans. It is perhaps best known, however, for its neon-lit Jumbo Floating Restaurant (the largest in the world). Situated near the harbor is Ocean Park, a popular amusement park with roller coaster rides, large reef aquariums, performing dolphins and killer whales as well as the giant pandas, An An and Jia Jia. Repulse Bay is renowned for its pristine beach, overlooked by the Tin Hau Temple, and Stanley is well worth a trip for its outdoor markets.

Kowloon: Considered as Hong Kong's 'tourist Mecca', Tsim Sha Tsui is packed with tourist hotels, shops and markets. Nathan Road is a smart and fashionable shopping street, considered the equivalent of Fifth Avenue or the Champs Elysées. Near to the star ferry pier stands the old Clock Tower – the remaining piece from the Kowloon-Canton railway station that was re-located to Hung Hom in 1975. Worth visiting are the Hong Kong Museum of Art, which has exhibitions of jade, ceramic and calligraphy, and the Hong Kong Space Museum, with a Space Theatre. Kowloon Park features a Sculpture Walk with local and international exhibits, as well as Chinese and ornamental gardens. For a more spiritual retreat, tourists should visit either the Chi Lin Nunnery, a spectacular Tang Dynasty-style complex, or Wong Tai Sin Temple, built in honor of a shepherd who earned immortality. Many fortune-tellers congregate here. Further into Kowloon City, Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei offer unique bustling markets. In Yau Ma Tei, Temple Street is a normal commercial road until 1400 when makeshift stalls and carts appear for the Night Market, selling everything from

electrical goods to incense sticks. Mong Kok (thought to be the world's most densely populated urban area) heaves with selling and buying. Exotic fish and amphibians are sold at the Goldfish Market, and near the Yuen Po Street Bird Garden, intricate bamboo birdcages and songbirds can be purchased.

New Territories: The territories cover 796 sq km (306 sq miles) between Kowloon and Mainland China, and are a contrast of hilly woodlands, wildlife reserves, sandy bays, new towns and lively markets. Sha Tin is home to Sha Tin Racecourse, that normally stages horse races at the weekend, and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum which includes many interactive exhibits. The Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery, situated in the hills above Sha Tin, in fact houses around 13,000 small Buddha statues, and is well worth visiting.

Many historical and interesting sights are scattered among the New Territories. A beautifully designed complex, located in Tuen Mun, features pavilions, bonsai trees, lotus ponds and a Taoist temple that contains lanterns from Beijing's Imperial Palace. Built in 1486, Tsui Shing Lau Pagoda in Yuen Lang district is the oldest pagoda in Hong Kong. The Waterfront Park in Tai Po has a futuristic Lookout Tower that provides breathtaking views across Tolo Harbor. Further north, on the border with China, is the fantastic Fung Ying Seen Koon Temple, built in the traditional Taoist style

with a double-tiered roof of orange tiles. For details of more sights contact the Hong Kong Tourism Board (see Contact Addresses section).

Outlying Islands: Hong Kong has over 260 outlying islands but only a few are inhabited. Lantau Island is famed for its Giant Buddha that sits upon Ngong Ping Plateau at the Po Lin Monastery. At 26m high and weighing in at 202 tons of bronze, it is the world's largest seated outdoor Buddha. Monks prepare vegetarian lunches at the monastery for visitors. Tanka boat people who live in traditional stilt-houses at the fishing village of Tai O can be visited. The island also boasts the white sandy beach, Cheung Sha, and the amazing Shek Pik Reservoir Dam. Day trips to Lantau and tours can be arranged from Hong Kong Island.

Lamma Island is renowned for its seafood and there are many restaurants and cafes along the sea front. The walk to the village of Yung Shue Wan provides a wonderful hilltop vista of Hong Kong's distant skyline. Cheung Chau and Peng Chau are still traditional fishing islands with simple temples and unspoilt beaches. Cheung Chau holds an annual Bun Festival in celebration of Pak Tai (a god that influences good sailing and fishing). Bamboo towers covered in steamed buns are constructed as an offering to the god.

Numerous other islands can be visited as a tranquil alternative to the frenetic energy of the rest of Hong Kong.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored. But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects.

Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration.

Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.

- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eye shades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions.
- You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.